

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please add the following paragraph prior to the paragraph beginning on page 1, line 2 of the specification:

(Newly Added) The present application is a continuation of U.S. Application Serial No. 09/975,392 filed October 10, 2001, pending, which is a continuation of U.S. Application Serial No. 08/789,751 filed January 27, 1997, which is now U.S. Patent No. 6,346,077, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Application Serial Number 08/603,758 filed on February 20, 1996 which is now U.S. Patent No. 5,894,843. U.S. Application Serial Numbers 08/975,392 and U.S. Patent Nos. 6,346,077 and 5,894,843 are hereby incorporated herein, in their entireties, by reference thereto.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 28, line 5 as follows:

(Amended) As noted above, a fundamental element of the invention is the contact members which engage the surface of the beating heart, in some embodiments proximal to the site of the anastomosis, to directly apply the stabilizing force to the beating heart. The actual shape, size, configuration, and relative orientation of the contact members may vary without departing from the spirit of the invention. For example, referring to Figures 4A and 4B, the contact members 1 that engage the surface of the beating heart may be provided by a solid structure 21, preferably a dense metal, which provides an added weight to add to the stabilizing effect achieved by contacting the beating heart with the stabilizing means of the invention. This embodiment facilitates motion cancellation and stabilization of the beating heart by adding additional weight directly at the site where the contact member engages the beating heart, which in this embodiment is at the site of the anastomosis. As can be seen in Figure 4B through line [A-A] IV-IV of Figure 4A, in this embodiment, two contact members 1a, 1b engage the beating heart at their lower or bottom surface 4, have a greater thickness at their outer edges, and have an opening 22 positioned therebetween, and which traverses the entire space between the contact members 1a, 1b such that a vessel may be positioned therebetween.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 68, line 7 as follows:

(Amended) As shown in Figure 50A, the spring mechanism 249 may also be mounted at the distal portion of the shaft means 3 and the spring 252 may be external to a central shaft 256. An additional configuration (Figure 50B) having a damped vertical motion is provided by a fluid-dampening mechanism consisting of a chamber 257 with a seal 260 having a plunger 258 for moving therein wherein said plunger has a piston 261 having an annular seal 261a thereabout, such as a rubber O-ring seal, that engages the internal portion of the chamber 257 to substantially seal the passage of fluid. Piston 261 has one or more orifices 269 to restrict the flow of fluid therethrough. Additionally, inside plunger 258 is a one-way valve such as a spring-loaded ball 258a within a bypass passage 258b. As an upward vertical force is imparted upon the central shaft 250, the fluid dampening mechanism restricts the ability of the central shaft 250 to move upward, while its downward motion is relatively unrestricted, due to fluid flowing through bypass passage 258b.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 74, line 1 as follows:

(Amended) the contact members 1 to be positioned at any point within a given arc as defined by the flexible shaft 303. Also, the entirety of the curved shaft 303 may be positioned in a perpendicular direction away from the length of the retractor blade 307 using the adjustable arm 305. Figure 56B shows a top view from [A-A] LVI-LVI of the adjustable arm 305 which may have a slot or groove formed in the body thereof allowing continuous positioning until the arm is fixed in position by a locking mechanism 308. Thumbscrew 312c locks the position of ball 304 in member in place.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 78, line 18 as follows:

(Amended) Referring to Figure 63, the stabilizing means of the invention may advantageously be provided with a rib locking mechanism 371 affixed to either side of a rib 372_r to form a stable support for shaft means 3 that extends from the rib locking mechanism 371 into the chest cavity. The rib locking mechanism 371 is comprised of an adjustable post 373 preferably disposed with a slot 376 formed in the body of the rib locking mechanism 371 and its positioned between two adjacent ribs 372_r, 373_r and a blade 374 affixed to the opposite side of the rib 372_r most adjacent to the incision. The position of the blade 374 is adjustable relative to the post 373 by sliding the mechanism 371 along the slot 376 and fixing it in place with a locking latch 373.

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